

HA-1468

1897

Norris House - St. Margaret's  
School and Convent  
31 E. Pennsylvania Avenue  
Bel Air  
demolished

This large "Scotch Cottage" that Jacob Bull designed was built in 1897 for the Norris Brothers, John W. Stump Norris and Octavius J. Norris. In 1911 the house became the School and Convent for St. Margaret's. More recently it was divided into apartments.

# MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

HA-1468  
1314686604

## INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

### 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Norris House - St. Margaret's School & Convent

AND/OR COMMON

### 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

31 E. Pennsylvania Avenue

1st

CITY, TOWN

Bel Air

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Harford

### 3 CLASSIFICATION

#### CATEGORY

\_\_\_ DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

\_\_\_ STRUCTURE

\_\_\_ SITE

\_\_\_ OBJECT

#### OWNERSHIP

\_\_\_ PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

\_\_\_ BOTH

#### PUBLIC ACQUISITION

\_\_\_ IN PROCESS

\_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

#### STATUS

\_\_\_ OCCUPIED

☒ UNOCCUPIED

\_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS

#### ACCESSIBLE

\_\_\_ YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_\_ YES: UNRESTRICTED

☒ NO

#### PRESENT USE

\_\_\_ AGRICULTURE

\_\_\_ COMMERCIAL

\_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL

\_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_\_ GOVERNMENT

\_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL

\_\_\_ MILITARY

\_\_\_ MUSEUM

\_\_\_ PARK

\_\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_\_ RELIGIOUS

\_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC

\_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION

☒ OTHER: Vacant

### 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

David Cohen

Telephone #: 838-2828

STREET & NUMBER

9 S. Main

CITY, TOWN

Bel Air

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21014

### 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Harford County Courthouse

Liber #: 366

Folio #: 367

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Bel Air

STATE

Maryland

### 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

HA-1468

### CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT  
☐ GOOD  
☐ FAIR  
☒ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED  
☒ ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This large two bay two and a half story house is at 31 E. Pennsylvania Avenue in the Town of Bel Air, Harford County, Maryland. It faces the corner of Pennsylvania and Hickory, thus sitting at an angle on its large wooded lot. It is composed of a two bay by two bay main block with a jerkinhead gable roof, a back building with a jerkinhead roof at right angles to that of the main block, and a 2 story shed roofed addition behind that. A single story addition runs beside the shed roofed one. It has a vaguely hipped roof and is probably an enclosed porch.

The building is shiplap sided on the first floor and wood shingled on the second floor. Shed roofed dormers with paired 1/1 windows break the roof line in front (NE). The second story windows are 2/1. In front in the first story they are 2 long over 2 horizontal. Rotting shutters frame the windows.

A hipped roof porch with a projecting center portion is carried on chamfered posts. A row of spindles runs just under the eaves. The balusters are turned, and there are decorative brackets. The porch itself is unsafe.

This once magnificent house has been apartments for many years. It has reached the bottom of its long slide into degradation. The interior was unavailable for inspection because it is deemed unsafe by the owner. The building is scheduled to be demolished shortly.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES      1897      ~~XXXXX~~/ARCHITECT      Jacob Bull

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This large "Scotch cottage" was built in 1897 by Jacob Bull, Bel Air's Master Builder, for John W. Stump Norris and Octavius J. Norris. The Norris Brothers bought the land that year from Charles L. Dallam (91/191). The house is large and ornate for Bel Air, even though it was built to be the home of the two bachelor brothers.

In 1911 Octavius Norris sold the property to James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore (132/338). Although the General Assembly of the State of Maryland was required by the State Constitution to ratify the sale (to a foreign Prince?) it neglected to do so in the 18 years the house was used as St. Margaret's Convent and School.

In June 1928 Bishop Michael J. Curley sold the property to Simon Getz for \$8000 (208/421). In July, Cassandra Lee, the residuary legatee of Octavius Norris, executed a confirmatory deed, too (208/421). Getz sold it in August 1928 to C. Greek Irwin (208/422). In 1933 Irwin sold it to James Wheeler (227/289). When Wheeler sold it to the present owner, David Cohen (366/367,1951) it was known as the Wheeler Apartments. It has been apartments ever since, degenerating rapidly.

It is closed and vacant, due to be demolished the week of October 1, 1979.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Harford Democrat

Interview with Miss Hazel Esley, 26 September 1979

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This property occupies parcel #871 in the Town of Bel Air, 150' x 200'

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Marilynn Larew, Architectural Historian

27 September 1979

ORGANIZATION

Town of Bel Air

DATE

838-8700

STREET & NUMBER

39 Hickory Avenue

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Bel Air

STATE

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438

TITLE: 31 E. Pennsylvania Avenue

366/367

1 December 1951  
James A. Wheeler & Melissa  
to  
David Cohen & Hanna  
the property now known as the Wheeler Apts.  
Lillian Wheeler died; James married & divorced  
Miriam, then married Melissa.

227/289

27 October 1933  
C. Greek Irwin & Della May  
to  
James A. Wheeler & Lillian  
the Wheelers to assume \$4000 mortgage (212/122)

208/422

7 August 1928  
Simon Getz & Kate  
to  
C. Greek Irwin & Della May

208/421

1 June 1928  
Michael J. Curley, Archbishop of Baltimore  
to  
Simon Getz & Kate  
\$8000

208/421

24 July 1928  
S. Cassandra Lee  
to  
Simon Getz & Kate  
1. Octavius J. Norris conveyed the property to  
James Cardinal Gibbons (21 Feb 1911,  
132/338) but the State of Maryland, required  
by the State Constitution to ratify, neglected to  
do so.  
2. Octavius Norris died, 12 October 1923, and  
left Cassandra Lee as residuary legatee. She  
gives confirmatory deed.

91/191

25 May 1897

Charles L. Dallam & Isabel & Frank H. Jacobs  
to

John W. Stump Norris & Octavius J. Norris  
Jacobs releases the property from a mortgage  
(1890, 87/30).

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST 21 STATE CIRCLE SHAW HOUSE ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401  HISTORIC SITES SURVEY FIELD SHEET Individual Structure Survey Form		SURVEY NUMBER: HA-1468  NEGATIVE FILE NUMBER:  UTM REFERENCES: Zone/Easting/Northing  U.S.G.S. QUAD. MAP:  PRESENT FORMAL NAME: Cohen Apartments	
COUNTY: Harford TOWN: Bel Air LOCATION: 31 E. Pennsylvania Avenue  COMMON NAME: House FUNCTIONAL TYPE: private residence OWNER: David Cohen ADDRESS: 9 S. Main Bel Air ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Yes( ) No(x) Restricted( ) LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local(x) State( ) National( )		ORIGINAL FORMAL NAME: Norris House - St. Margaret's school & convent PRESENT USE: to be demolished ORIGINAL USE: private residence ARCHITECT/ENGINEER: Jacob Bull BUILDER/CONTRACTOR:  PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE: Excellent( ) Good( ) Fair( ) Poor(x) THEME: Architecture STYLE: Vernacular DATE BUILT: 1897	
GENERAL DESCRIPTION: Structural System 1. Foundation: Stone(x) Brick( ) Concrete( ) Concrete Block( ) 2. Wall Structure A. Wood Frame: Post and Beam( ) Balloon( ) B. Wood Bearing Masonry: Brick( ) Stone( ) Concrete( ) Concrete Block( ) C. Iron( ) D. Steel( ) E. 1 <sup>st</sup> Other: 3. Wall Covering: Clapboard(x) Board and Batten( ) Wood Shingle(x) Shiplap( ) Novelty( ) Stucco( ) Sheet Metal( ) Aluminum( ) Asphalt Shingle( ) Brick Veneer( ) Stone Veneer( ) Bonding Pattern: Other: 4. Roof Structure A. Truss: Wood( ) Iron( ) Steel( ) Concrete( ) B. Other: 5. Roof Covering: Slate( ) Wood Shingle( ) Asphalt Shingle(x) Sheet Metal( ) Built Up( ) Rolled( ) Tile( ) Other: 6. Engineering Structure: 7. Other: Appendages: Porches(x) Towers( ) Cupolas( ) Dormers(x) Chimneys(x) Sheds( ) Ells( ) Wings( ) Other: with Roof Style: Gable(x) Hip( ) Shed( ) Flat( ) Mansard( ) Gambrel( ) Jerkinhead(x) Saw Tooth( ) With Monitor( ) With Bellcast( ) With Parapet( ) With False Front( ) Other: Number of Stories: 2½ Number of Bays: 2 Approximate Dimensions: 40' x 75' inc. porch Entrance Location: Hickory Avenue			
THREAT TO STRUCTURE: No Threat( ) Zoning( ) Roads( ) Development( ) Deterioration( ) Alteration( ) Other: to be demolished		LOCAL ATTITUDES: Positive( ) Negative( ) Mixed( ) Other:	



## ADDITIONAL ARCHITECTURAL OR STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION:

porch chamfered posts, turned balusters, small  
 roof shed with spindles over & decorative bracket  
 window 1st floor 2 long over 2 horizontal 2nd 2/1  
 shed roof dormers w paired 1/1 windows

## RELATED STRUCTURES: (Describe)

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

s Jacob Bull house - called a "Scotch cottage" in  
 the Harford Democrat, 18 June 1897  
 St. Margaret's School & Convent 1911-1928

## REFERENCES:

## MAP: (Indicate North in Circle)



S. Hickory

## SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT:

Open Lane( ) Woodland( ) Scattered Buildings( )  
 Moderately Built Up( ) Densely Built Up( )  
 Residential(✓) Commercial(✓)  
 Agricultural( ) Industrial( )  
 Roadside Strip Development( )  
 Other:

Marilynn Larew

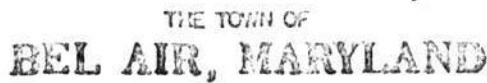
## RECORDED BY:

Town of Bel Air

## ORGANIZATION:

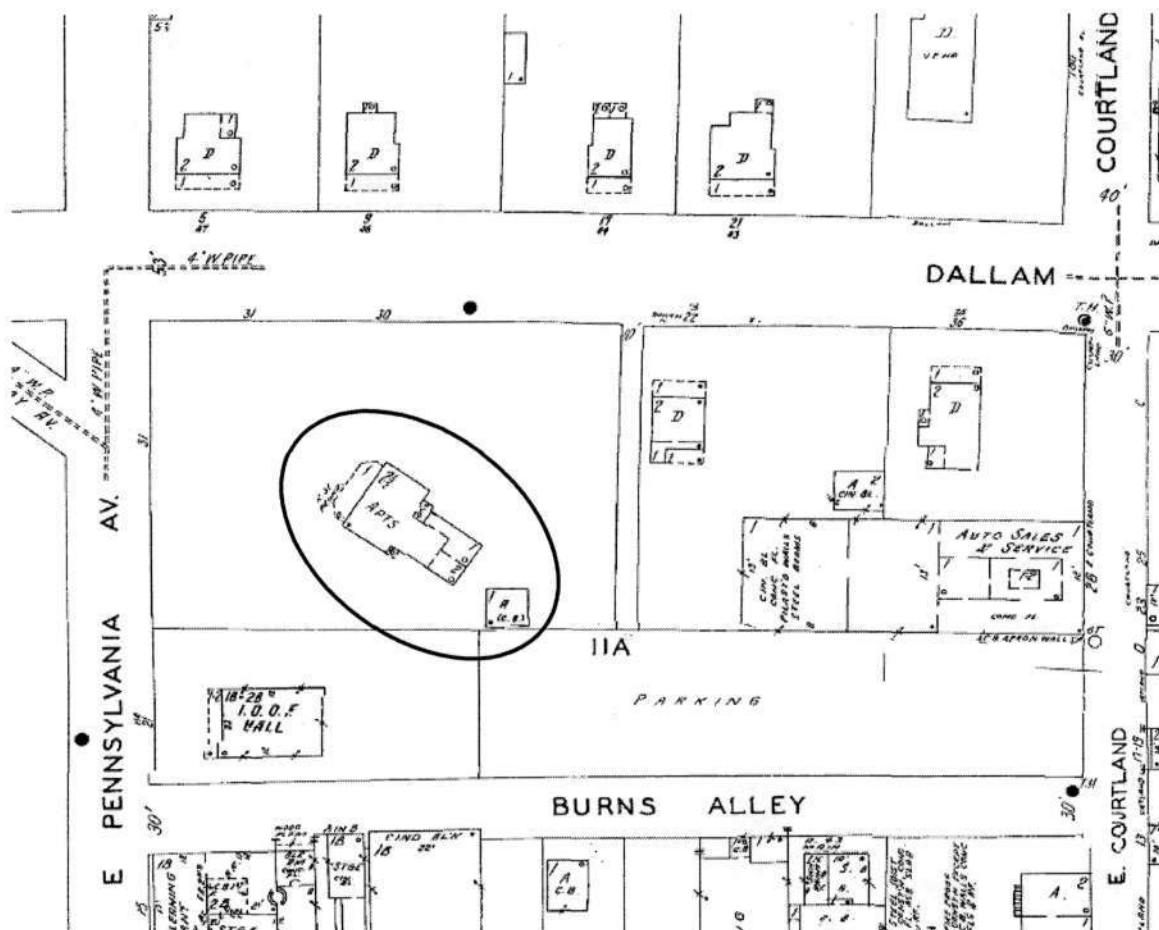
26 September 1979

## DATE RECORDED:

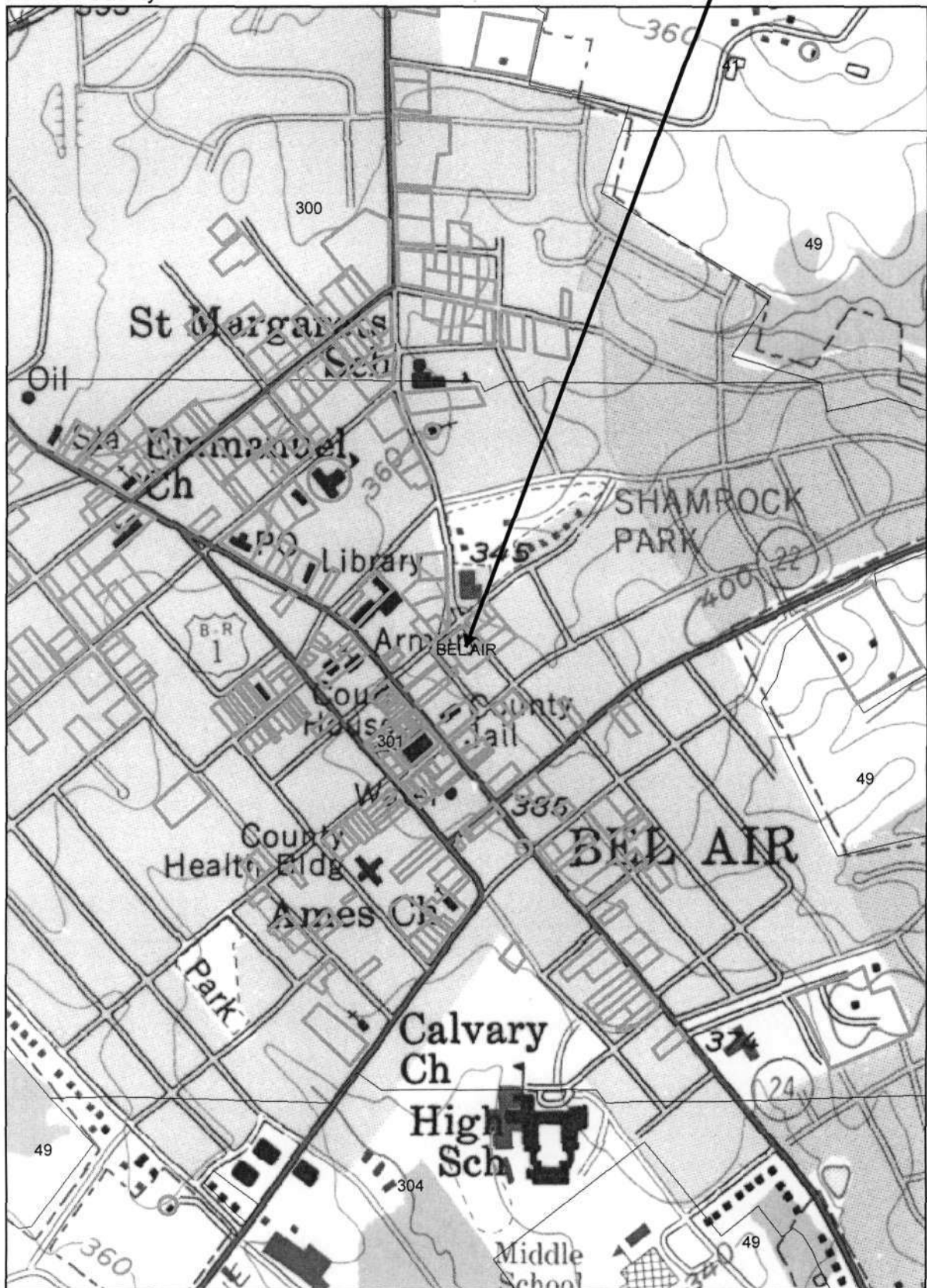


Norris House - St. Margaret's School & Convent  
3/ Penna. Ave

HA-1468  
 Norris House (St. Margaret's School and Convent)  
 31 E. Pennsylvania Ave.  
 Bel Air  
 Sanborn Bel Air Aug. 1930-Sept. 1961  
 Harford County



HA-1468  
Norris House (St. Margaret's School and Convent)  
Pennsylvania Avenue  
Bel Air  
Bel Air Quad  
Harford County





HA-1468

Norris House - St. Margarets  
31 E. Pinna, Belair

see also

M. Larew, 1979



HA- 1468

Novia House - St. Margarets

31 E. Penna., Bel Air

S. elev.

M. Larrus, 1979





HA- 1468

Novis House - St Margarets

31 E. Penna., Bel air

w. elev.

M. Lacroix, 1979



14A-1468 Norris House - St. Margarets  
31 E. Penna, Bel air  
n. clw.

M. Larew, 1979